AFTER SCHOOL SPECIAC

ABC NETWORK

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FOLLOW THE NORTH STAR

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TEASER

FADE IN

EXT. A COUNTRY ROAD IN PENNSYLVANIA - DAY SCENE 1. 1

LOVELY, ROLLING FARM COUNTRY ON A SPRING DAY. A FARM WAGON COMES INTO VIEW. WE WATCH IT APPROACH US.

ANOTHER ANGLE: 2

TO SHOW THE HAY PILED HIGH IN THE WAGON

THE FARMER 3

A ROBUST MAN, HIS NAME IS EPHRAIM DUDLEY. CAMERA STAYS WITH HIM AS THE WAGON JOLTS ALONG. HE GLANCES AROUND HIM ... SEEMINGLY CASUALLY, YET VERY ALERT AS TO WHAT IS ALL ABOUT. AFTER A FEW MOMENTS, HIS FARM COMES INTO VIEW.

DIRT ROAD TO FARM 4

AS THE WAGON TURNS ON TO IT ... GROANING UNDER A HEAVY WEIGHT.

THE FARMHOUSE SCENE 2. 5

AS ITS DOOR OPENS AND SARAH DUDLEY, EPHRAIM'S WIFE, EMERGES. SHE MOVES INTO THE YARD, TOWARD THE BARN..

EXT. THE BARN SCENE 3. 6

ANGLING FROM THE OPEN DOOR AS THE WAGON DRAWS TO A HALT IN FRONT OF IT. AS SARAH MOVES TOWARD IT QUICKLY, EPHRAIM VAULTS DOWN FROM HIS PERCH AND HURRIES TOWARD THE REAR OF THE WAGON. HE'S ALL BUSINESS.

EPHRAIM

We're home, Harriet.

HE BEGINS PULLING AWAY THE HAY AND HARRIET TUBMAN, A DYNAMIC BLACK WOMAN IN HER THIRTIES, EMERGES FROM THE HIDING PLACE. SHE WEARS A BANDANA AROUND HER HEAD TO CONCEAL A SCAR ON HER UPPER FOREHEAD. SHE TOO NOW STARTS PULLING AWAY THE HAY AND OTHER BLACKS BEGIN TO BE SEEN ... BOTH MEN AND WOMEN.

HARRIET

Come on now. All of you. Set foot on Pennsylvania. Watch yourself there. Don't go breaking a leg the first day you find yourself free. You've got a chance for freedom.

AS EPHRAIM AND SARAH BEGIN GUIDING THE SLAVES INTO THE HOUSE ..

CUT TO:

EXT. DIRT ROAD. DAY-CLOSE-BENJY SCENE 4. 7

RUNNING FOR DEAR LIFE AND THE CAMERA KEEPING UP WITH HIM. A GREAT ANXIETY IS SPURRING HIM ON.

ANOTHER ANGLE: 8

WATCHING HIM CLAMBER OVER A STONE WALL AND CUT ACROSS A FIELD TOWARD THE FARMHOUSE.

THE FARMHOUSE SCENE 5. 9

AS HE RUNS UP TO IT AND PUSHES OPEN THE DOOR.

INT. THE HOUSE SCENE 6. 10

AS HE BURSTS IN. WE ARE IN THE KITCHEN AND THREE FUGITIVES WHO ARE PACKING FOOD INTO A BAG, TURN IN ALARM. SARAH LOOKS UP FROM THE FIREPLACE WITH MILD AMUSEMENT AND EPHRAIM, SEATED AT THE TABLE WHERE HE IS GOING OVER A MAP WITH HARRIET, AGAINST THE DOOR ... THOROUGHLY OUT OF BREATH.

EPHRAIM

Calm yourselves. Benjy runs whether he has to or not.

BENJY

He's here. In the town. I saw him.

HARRIET RISES, MOVES INTO THE F.G. A WOMAN OF GREAT AUTHORITY AND QUIET STRENGTH, HER MANNER SERVES TO STILL ANY PANIC IN THE OTHERS. SHE LOOKS DOWN AT THE BOY WITH AN ILL-DISGUISED AFFECTION.

HARRIET

The way you're out of breath, it must have been the devil himself.

BENJY CANNOT BRING HIMSELF TO IDENTIFY THE MAN.

BENJY

Yes m'am.

HE TURNS TO HIS FATHER

BENJY

Pa?

HARRIET

Don't be afraid to tell me, boy. It was a man asking people if they'd seen any runaway slaves. Was that it?

HE HESITATES

HARRIET

We're not going to faint away, Benjy. Any of us. Just tell us.

BENJY

(NODS) Yes m'am. He was asking for you.

HARRIET

And did he say there was money for those who told on us?

BENJY

Five dollars for each of you.

EPHRAIM

They've raised the price. Generous.

WOMAN SLAVE

It'd him all right. The bounty hunter. Pay more for a dog, he would.

MALE SLAVE

(TO HARRIET) The way we travelled.. hiding all the time. How'd he find us.

HARRIET

He smells his reward. Brother he'll follow us to Canada to get it. He's more bloodhoud that man.

THE SOUND OF AN APPROACHING HORSE BEGINS TO INTRUDE ON THE SCENE

HARRIET (Cont'd)

But we didn't come this far to have anyone take us back. (TO EPHRAIM) We don't mean for you to have no trouble either. We can't wait 'til dark. We better leave now.

THE HORSE IS NOW CLOSER AND THEIR ATTENTION IS DRAWN TO IT. THEY LISTEN IN SILENCE FOR ONE FEARFUL MOMENT AS EPHRAIM HURRIES TO THE WINDOW. HE GLANCES OUT AND THEN TURNS INTO THE ROOM.

EPHRAIM

(TO SARAH AND BENJY) Hide them! Quickly!

AS BENJY AND SARAH BEGIN GUIDING THE FUGITIVES INTO THE NEXT ROOM, AMIDST THE TENSION AND URGENCY ...

FADE OUT

END TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN

INT. THE FARMHOUSE SCENE 7. 11

THE ACTION IS JUST A FEW MOMENTS LATER. MOST OF THE SLAVES HAVE DISAPPEARED INTO AN ADJOINING ROOM. EPHRAIM IS PEERING OUT THE WINDOW.

POV-THROUGH WINDOW 11A

A MAN IS DISMOUNTING IN THE YARD. HE IS NEATLY DRESSED ... HIS FACE IMPASSIVE. AS HE EYES THE HOUSE ...

INT. HOUSE 12

EPHRAIM MOTIONS TO HIS SON.

EPHRAIM

Benjy.

BENJY HURRIES TO THE WINDOW AND PEERS OUT.

EPHRAIM

That the man?

POV-THROUGH WINDOW 13

THE MAN IS USING HIS WIDE BRIM HAT TO DUST HIMSELF OFF. HIS APPEARANCE IS OBVIOUSLY IMPORTANT TO HIM. NOW, AS HE STARTS TOWARD THE HOUSE ...

INT. HOUSE 14

A MALE FUGITIVE HAS LINGERED IN THE ADJOINING ROOM'S DOORWAY ... HOPING AGAINST HOPE THAT ALL WOULD BE WELL AND THAT THE VISITOR WAS A FRIEND.

BENJY

That's him.

EPHRAIM SEES THE FUGITIVE WHO HAS LINGERED.

EPHRAIM

Inside, quickly ... quickly.

MALE SLAVE

No more place for us to run, Mr. Dudley.
No use in your trying for us.

HARRIET

You a man or you going to crawl around on your belly the rest of your life? You let him take you back. You deserve whatever they do to you.

THERE IS THE SOUND OF THE DOOR KNOCKER. EPHRAIM' MOTIONS WITH URGENCY FOR BENJY, HARRIET AND THE MALE SLAVE TO GO INTO THE NEXT ROOM WHICH THEY DO.. CLOSING THE DOOR BEHIND THEM. SARAH MOVES TO THE FIRE AND BUSIES HERSELF WITH COOKING .. AS THE KNOCKER SOUNDS AGAIN. EPHRAIM, WITH ONE LAST LOOK AROUND TO ASSURE HIMSELF THAT ALL IS IN ORDER .. SPIES THE BLANKET IN WHICH SOME OF THE SLAVES WERE PUTTING FOOD. HE QUICKLY HURRIES BACK.. PICKS IT UP AND PUTS IT INTO A CLOSET. HE CROSSES TO THE DOOR .. OPENS IT. THE VISITOR IS REVEALED AND HE REMOVES HIS HAT.

FOLSOM

My name's Folsom, Mr. Dudley. Can I visit with you a minute?

EPHRAIM

You're welcome here, sir.

HE STEPS ASIDE AND FOLSOM ENTERS. HE NODS TO SARAH, MEANWHILE CASTING A SEARCHING LOOK AROUND THE ROOM.

EPHRAIM

My wife, sir.

FOLSOM

A privilege, M'am.

FOLSOM AGAIN LOOKS AROUND THE ROOM, THIS TIME, RATHER DELIBERATELY. HE SEEMS TO BE LISTENING.

EPHRAIM

What can we do for you, Mr. Folsom?

FOLSOM

This is a nice piece of property you have here, Mr. Dudley. And you worked right hard for it, didn't you sir?

EPHRAIM

A little touch of Providence hasn't hurt.

FOLSOM

By the look of your hands, there was more than a touch of Dudley.

SARAH

You asking if we want to sell, Mr. Folsom?

FOLSOM

No. No, it's not that, m'am. I was just thinking that you know the meaning of property. And .. as I don't suppose you'd want to lose yours, then you wouldn't want another man to lost his.

EPHRAIM

I don't want to be impolite but is there a point in all this?

ANOTHER ANGLE 15

AS THE DOOR TO THE HIDING PLACE BEGINS TO OPEN SLIGHTLY. FOLSOM DOESN'T SEE IT BUT EPHRAIM DOES. FOLSOM BEGINS TO REVEAL A TRACE OF IRRITATION AT EPHRAIM'S CALMNESS.

FOLSOM

I'm talking about slaves, Mr. Dudley. Five slaves who've run away from their rightful owner in Dorchester County in Maryland. Five slaves who I mean to bring back.

INT. BENJY'S ROOM. LOOKING OUT SCENE 8.

WE ARE LOOKING PAST HIM THRU THE SLIGHTLY OPEN DOOR AT THE KITCHEN 16

EPHRAIM

What's all that to do with us?

FOLSOM

I've a warrant for them. If you've seen them, I'm advise you to obey the law.

EPHRAIM

We don't keep slaves here. Pennsylvania is a free state.

THE KITCHEN 17

FOLSOM

Whether you like it or not, there's a law about runaway slaves. No matter which state they're in they're still personal property and I have a right to take them back to their owner.

BENJY'S DOOR MOVES SLIGHTLY AND FOLSOM CATCHES THE MOVEMENT. HE CASUALLY PUTS HIMSELF INTO POSITION TO WATCH THE DOOR.

FOLSOM (cont'd)

If I were you, I'd save myself a lot of trouble. What do you say, Mr. Dudley? Think you can help.

EPHRAIM

Sorry, Mr. Folsom. Nothing we can do for you.

FOLSOM

Maybe there is.

HE MAKES A SUDDEN MOVE TOWARD BENJY'S DOOR.

EPHRAIM

Wait ... come back here ...

INT. BENJY'S ROOM SCENE 9. 18

AS FOLSOM BURSTS IN. HE LOOKS AROUND .. AS CAMERA PANS THE ROOM. EXCEPT FOR A STARTLED BENJY, THERE IS NO ON ELSE IN THE SIMPLE BEDROOM. HIS PARENTS HURRY INTO THE ROOM.

EPHRAIM

I want you out of here, Folsom, Now.

FOLSOM

Where are they, boy?

BENJY JUST STARES AT HIM.

FOLSOM

Where are they hiding?

EPHRAIM

I warned you.

FOLSOM

That woman's been here, hasn't she. 'The conductor' on your 'underground railroad'.

EPHRAIM

You've had too much sun, Mister. The nearest railroad's in Philadelphia.

FOLSOM

(ANGRILY) You're not a stupid man Dudley. And neither am I. We caught an escaped slave.. And he told us he was here. With Harriet Tubman. Or do you call her Moses also?

EPHRAIM

Are you quoting scripture now?

FOLSOM CONTROLS HIS ANGER. HE GOES TO THE DOOR AND THEN TURNS TO FACE THEM.

FOLSOM

I've read the law Mr. Dudley and I'll not be far away.

HE GOES OUT... AND IN A MOMENT THE FRONT DOOR CLOSES HEAVILY. THERE IS SILENCE IN THE ROOM AS WE HEAR HIM RIDING AWAY. EPHRAIM NODS TO BENJY AND TOGETHER THEY MOVE THE BED AWAY. EPHRAIM KNOCKS ON THE WALL IN A SIGNAL AND THEN OPENS A FALSE WALL.

CLOSE SHOT - EPHRAIM 19

EPHRAIM

It's all right, Harriet. You're all safe.

CAMERA GOES FROM HIS COMPASSION TO THE FACES OF THE SLAVES. THEY LOOK UP AND WE SEE THEIR EXHAUSTED SILENCE. WE HOLD ON THEM FOR A MOMENT THEN..

CUT TO:

EXT. THE FARMHOUSE YARD - DAY SCENE 10. 20

THE FUGITIVES ARE IN A WAGON AND EPHRAIM IS HIDING THEM BEHIND SOME FURNITURE. HARRIET AND SARAH, TOGETHER WITH BENJY, ARE STANDING NEXT TO IT ... WATCHING.